

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and 32 are presently active in this case. The present Amendment amends Claims 1-4, 8-13, 17-18, 20, 22, 24, and 26 and cancels Claims 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33-34. As discussed in greater detail below, the changes to the claims are for clarification purposes and do not introduce any new matter.

The outstanding Office Action (1) rejected Claims 21-32 and 34 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite and (2) rejected Claims 19 and 33-34 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Inage (JP 9-154019) and in view of information discussed in the specification.

Claims 1-18 were allowed and Claim 20 was indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter.

In response to the objection to Claim 20, Claim 19 is cancelled and dependent Claim 20 is rewritten in independent form including all features of independent Claim 19. Further, Claims 1-4, 8-13 and 17-18 have been amended to correct minor informalities in the claim language. Since all the changes are only of formal manner, the changes are not believed to raise any question on new matter.

In response to the rejection of Claims 21-32 and 34 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, Claims 22 and 24 are amended to correct the noted informalities. In particular, Claim 22 is amended to recite “in accordance with plural black level value calculation steps performed at a stage subsequent to said black-shading compensation.” Claim 24 is amended to recite “said plural black level value calculating steps,” thereby correcting the noted informality. Further, Claims 24 and 26 are amended to correct other informalities in the

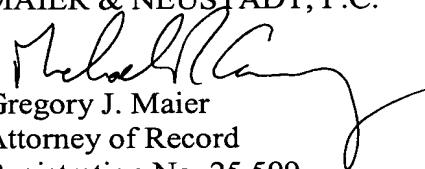
claim language and Claims 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33 and 31-34 are cancelled. Since all the changes are only of formal manner, the changes are not believed to raise any question on new matter. In view of amended Claims 22, 24 and 26, it is believed that all pending claims are definite and no further rejection on that basis is anticipated. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work with the Examiner in a joint effort to derive mutually acceptable language.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and 32 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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